

**DECISION MEMO**  
**Chute Access Improvement and Cutbank Restoration**  
Zigzag Ranger District - Mt. Hood National Forest  
Clackamas County, Oregon  
August 2005

**Introduction**

The Forest Service proposes to improve the pedestrian and vehicle access along the roadway just to the north of Wy'east Day Lodge from the Lower Parking lot (Magic Mile drainage) west to the Summer Ski equipment staging area access road. The proposal also includes the stabilization and restoration of the cutbank area on the northside of the access road, and a drainage diversion structure located approximately 1,500 to the north of the cutbank area.

**Proposed Action:**

**Construct a 5-foot (minimum) wide concrete walkway** along south side of access road and adjacent to the Wy'east Lodge to separate pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

**Reconstruct the existing trail** from the toe of the cutbank just west of the Mile Drainage Channel to the Summer Staging Access Road just to the east of the Lodge, to allow visitors access to the local trail system. The tread would be 5- foot wide and consist of crushed rock, colored a medium gray or similar to blend in with the surrounding volcanic landscape. . Steps, borders, and retaining walls would be of cut stone similar to that found on Timberline Lodge.

**Construct an alcove for the existing trail** that would serve to increase the trail visibility and provide trail signage. The alcove would provide protection to the steps from snow removal equipment. Retaining walls would be constructed of boulder using rock and mortar similar to that found on the "Generator" building chimney.

**Construct a Welcome Plaza** adjacent to the northeast corner of the Wy'east Daylodge to provide a focal point for arriving visitors. Kiosk displays would provide information on trails, environmental education, and activities and opportunities in the local area.

The plaza would consist of one or two sheltered kiosks with display panels that would provide area information and environmental education, etc. Plaza surface would consist of flagstone or pavers or similar material. Plaza surface would incorporate a below ground hydronic/electric heating system to minimize use of snow removal machinery. Retaining walls would be of cut stone similar to Timberline Lodge stonework. The inlaid compass, if installed would recognize both Timberline Lodge and the USDA-Forest Service.

**Restore the cutbank** by restoring drainage function along entire cutbank. The cutbank would be terraced with large boulders, and restored with native plant species using soil amendments and/or hydro-seed mixture.

The project design, including soil type, compaction specifications, and erosion control measures would be developed by a qualified engineer. Stamped drawings and specifications would be incorporated into a Construction Plan. The final design drawings for the drainage structures would include construction specifications for :

1. A drainage diversion structure approximately 1500' north and directly above the project site in the vicinity of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. This first section would be an open swale approximately 12' wide x 5' deep x 400' in length. Beginning near the summer staging access road and just south of the PCNST, the swale would bear east to the small ridge just west of the Mile Creek (intermittent). Bottom and sidewalls of swale would be armored with CL-250 riprap. From just west of the small ridge a 50-long, 24" diameter pipe would continue east into Mile Creek. A catchment basin would be constructed between the end of the swale, and start of the 24" pipe. At the outflow of the pipe a 10'x20'x2' area would be armored with cl-250 riprap.
2. The 24-inch piping system located approximately 100 feet north of the cutbank and as shown on Greenworks/McKenzie conceptual drawing would be relocated to avoid trenching through a vegetated ridge before flowing into the Mile Creek.
3. A storm water catchment basin and velocity disappator at the outflow of each of the three main drainage channels/piping structures prior to outflow into the Mile Creek.
4. French drain style structures for all lateral 6-inch perforated piping.
5. French drains or a similar structure to catch water draining from the lodge roofline that currently drains into the Chute Area.
6. Slit or curtain drainage structures (metal grates) with outflow dispersal structures within the full length of the asphalt service road at 50 to 100 foot intervals.
7. Stormwater retention basins/bioswales along the Mile Creek south of the maintenance shop at the following locations: a. the culvert outlet at north end of the island; b. at the south end of the island just downstream of the confluence of the two small streams, and c. below the culvert outlet below Hwy 173.

**Need:**

There is no defined pedestierian walkway from the lower parking lot to Timberline Lodge. Many visitors walk within the access road way that is being shared by two-way traffic. This lack of pedestrian and vehicle separation creates congestion and safety hazards to lodge visitors.

Lack of a well- defined trail system encourages visitors to leave vivinity trails, and to walk over and trample remaining fragile sub-alpine vegetation.

Trail Access and other area information is only available to visitors inside Timberline Lodge.

Failure of drainage structures on and above the cutbank have resulted in severe surface erosion.

The eroded cutbank, detracts from the ambiance of the historic lodge as visitors walk from the lower parking lot Timberline Lodge.

TimberLine Lodge lacks a “sense of arrival” for arriving visitors. There is no focal point for arriving visitors to orient themselves to the area or obtain local information.

### **Purpose:**

Improve the safety and circulation of both vehicle and pedestrian traffic, without reducing the number of parking spaces or that does not compromise concessionaire summer/winter operations.

Provide an inviting system of walking paths that direct visitors to their desired destinations, encourage visitors to remain on designated trails, and protect the alpine plant community. The trail system design and location must maintain or enhance the historical integrity and visual quality of Timberline Lodge.

Improve the visibility and access to local trails.

Improve availability of local trail information/opportunities, including environmental education information, before visitors reach the lodge.

Restore the cutbank to minimize erosion and sediment yield.

Restore native vegetation on the cutbank.

Enhance the approach and ambiance to the Lodge and provide a “Sense of Arrival” for visitors arriving to Timberline Lodge

### **Analysis:**

A project file has been prepared in conjunction with this decision memo. That file consists of: Project description, biological evaluations for sensitive, threatened and endangered plant and animal species, and a Heritage Resource review.

### **Scoping and Public Involvement**

Scoping for this project included review of the management direction for the area in the *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Mt. Hood National Forest* (Forest Plan), and the Northwest Forest Plan. An interdisciplinary team consisting of a fisheries biologist, wildlife biologist, botanist, archeologist, hydrologist and permit administrator were assigned to analyze the effects of this project.

These projects were listed in the Spring and Summer 2005 edition of the Forest’s Schedule of Proposed Actions publication known as *PALS*.

No comments were received.

## **Finding of Categorical Exclusion for the Proposed Action**

I find the proposed action fits under Category 31.2 (3); Approval, modification, or continuation or minor special uses of National forest System lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.

I also find that this action does not involve any extraordinary circumstances as listed in Section 30.3 (2) of the *Forest Service Handbook 1909.15-2004-3, July 6, 2004*. Extraordinary circumstances are:

- a. *Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species:*

A Biological Evaluation was conducted and determined that there are no effects to any proposed, listed, or sensitive species, or to critical habitat.

- b. *Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:*

This proposal would not adversely impact any flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

- c. *Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas:*

The permit area does not contain wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.

- d. *Inventoried roadless areas:*

The permit area does not contain any inventoried roadless areas.

- e. *Research natural areas:*

The permit area does not contain any research natural areas.

- f. *American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites:*

The permit area does not contain American Indian or Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.

- g. *Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas:*

The issuance of this permit will not adversely impact any archaeological sites or historic properties or areas. Under the 1995 Heritage Resource Programmatic Agreement between the Forest Service, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, renewal of existing special use permits and agreements is considered a “non-undertaking.”

Therefore, this action can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

## **Finding Required by Other Applicable Laws and Forest Service Policy:**

**Federal Land Policy and Management Act:** This Act allows the granting of permits, leases, and easements across National Forest System Lands. The regulations at 36 CFR 251 guide the issuance of permits, leases, and easements under this Act. Permits, leases, and easements are granted across National Forest System lands when the need for such is consistent with planned uses and Forest Service policy and regulations. This decision is consistent with this Act.

I have also determined this action is consistent with the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1990) as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (April, 1994). This project is also consistent with the Timberline Lodge Master Development Plan and 1998 Timberline Lodge MDP Amendment.

### **Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12, but it is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 251.86, by the applicant.

To appeal this decision under 36 CFR 251, the applicant must file a written Notice of Appeal meeting the content requirements of 36 CFR 251.90, and must be postmarked or received within 45 calendar days after the date of notice of this decision. However, when the 45-day filing period would end on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal Holiday, the filing time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day. The Notice of Appeal must be sent to: USDA, Forest Service, Mt. Hood National Forest, 16400 Champion Way, Sandy, OR 97055, ATTN: Forest Supervisor, Gary Larsen. The Notice of Appeal may alternatively be faxed to: USDA Forest Service, Mt. Hood National Forest, ATTN: Forest Supervisor, Gary Larsen (fax 503-668-1423). A copy of the appeal must simultaneously be sent to: USDA Forest Service, Zigzag Ranger District, 70220 E. Highway 26, Zigzag, OR, 97049, ATTN: Colleen Pelles-Madrid. If an appeal is filed, I am willing to meet and discuss concerns. Additionally, if an appeal is filed, an oral presentation concerning the appeal (36 CFR 251.97) and/or stay of implementation (36 CFR 251.91) of the decision may be requested at any time prior to closing the appeal record.

### Contact Person

For further information contact Paul Koehler at: Zigzag Ranger District, 70220 E. Hwy 26, Zigzag, OR 97028. (503) 622-3191, x614.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
COLLEEN PELLER MADRID  
District Ranger

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DATE